nature net

The NatureKenya Newsletter www.naturekenya.org May 03

NATURALISTS CORNER

Glow-in-the-dark Millipedes

Dino Martins
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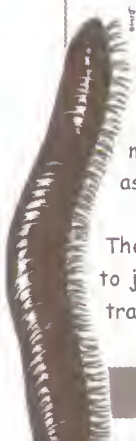
A cry of scolding alarm rings out over the tangled bush. It is a very agitated greater galago (bushbaby), shrieking its disapproval in no uncertain terms. The bushbaby is joined in its angry chorus by other bushbabies, and their concerted cries echo across the river. A closer look reveals the cause for the alarm. Half-curled along a lichen-encrusted branch is a large, brownish millipede, typical of riverine forests. Nothing particularly alarming about it, one would think.

However, this particular millipede, believe it or not, is glowing! Yes, it is producing light, a ghostly pale luminescence that shimmers about its cylindrical form like a mystical, clinging aura. I am tempted to rub my eyes, but looking again, the millipede is still glowing, even more brightly, it seems. I move closer, the bushbabies, still scolding, retreat a couple of metres into the tree's upper branches.

Viewed up close, the luminescence is quite amazing. The light comes from the surface of the segmented, cylindrical body. This light is without heat, cool and soft. With the loud cries and probing fingers of the curious bushbabies in retreat, the millipede gently uncoils, its glowing mantle following it. I watch amazed as it skirts around the crusty branch.

There is enough light generated for me to just make out the waves of motion travelling along its hundreds of legs.



EVENTS & MEETINGS

93RD ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

of the
East Africa
Natural History
Society
(NATURE KENYA)

Mon 12 May '03
5:00 p.m.
Louis Leakey Hall, National Museums, Nairobi

For the Chairman's report on the past year's activities, a financial account and the election of Executive Committee members.

It will also be an opportunity for you to get insights into the work of the various Nature Kenya committees and projects and learn how you too can get hands-on involvement!

Proposals for nomination can be filed with a Nomination Form, available at the Nature Kenya office. Nomination Forms should be returned to the office at least 7 days before the AGM.

also the 10th Annual General Meeting of
Succulenta East Africa
Sat 17 May '03
10:00 a.m.
Nairobi Botanic Garden office, National Museums

EXHIBIT

Dudus, Birds, Mammals, Arboretum, City Park, Legislation and Policy - *What do they have in commom?*

These are areas in which Nature Kenya has working groups and projects. There are many others like plants, habitat restoration and herpetofauna.

At the AGM these groups will be on hand to give information, answer your questions and tell you about how you can get involved.

Exhibit will be held prior to the AGM on Mon 12 May '03 from 4:00 p.m.
outside Louis Leakey Hall, National Museums
Refreshments will be served

Youth Committee (YC) Education and Outreach

Would you like to work with youth in conservation?

The Youth Committee has its monthly meetings every first Friday of the month i.e. the next meeting will be held on **Friday 4 May 03, 2:00 p.m. at the Nature Kenya office.** YC has no age-limits!

Postcodes

For continued efficient and undelayed delivery of your newsletter, please update the office with your postcode i.e. Box 44486, *(POSTCODE) GPO 00100* NAIROBI THANK YOU!

OPINION!

How many water experts to fix a tap?

By Richard Holland, WWF

At first glance it would seem that it takes about 12,000 water experts to fix a tap, judging by attendance at the 3rd World Water Forum held in Kyoto, Japan in March.

On the agenda was how to halve the number of people that lack taps and toilets by 2015 in order to make good the political commitments made at the World Summit for Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg in September 2002. Overall the forum was long on talk and short on tangible results.

The forum itself will probably be judged by most people on balance to have been a success. But much of this 'success' will not turn up in the forum's concluding documents, which by and large were disappointing. Rather, the forum provided the space for a considerable amount af new and productive discussion among groups who traditionally have not talked with one other — farming interests, business and industry, ocodemics, bankers, environmental ond development NGOs, and governments. These 'missing conversations' are surely one of the constroints to oddressing the Johannesburg targets as well as the wider challenges of water management.

Also missing in the past hos been an understanding of the need for good environmental manogement and investment in ecological health to underpin the delivery of more taps and toilets and to provide more water to grow food. Discussion ot the forum demonstrated that there is still a way to go before decision makers accept that protecting the ecosystems that provide the sources of our water is as important as pouring concrete to store and deliver water and to collect and treat waste. Similarly the argument that leaving water in river and lakes, instead of diverting it for farming, can also support food security for poor people downstream who depend on fish and other wetland goods for their livelihoods is only gaining acceptance slowly.

Continued on page 4

EVENING SKY

May Sky, from The Safa Star Guide by Alex and J MacK

By Ian MacKay and Fleur Ng'weno

Stars and Planets, May 2003

The chart above has a line traced through it called the 'ecliptic'. The planets are always found somewhere near this well defined path in the sky. This can make the task of finding the planets easier than it might otherwise be!

In May 2003 the bright golden plonet Jupiter is in the west-northwest, right in the middle of the constellation Cançer, the crob. To the west, towords the sunset, the ecliptic passes by two stars in a row, Castor and Pollux, the Gemini Twins.

Below Gemini, low over the sunset, the bright stor Copello is setting in the west-northwest. The plonet Soturn is a little above the horizon, to the left of Capella. The crescent moon is nearby around 5 Moy.

East of Jupiter, high overhead, is the constellation Leo the lion. Still further east along the ecliptic is the bright blue-white star Spica. The bright orange star Arcturus is in the northeast, below Spica. The constellation of the Plough (Ursa Major, Big Dipper) is lower in the northern sky.

Low in the south, look for the constellotion of the Southern Cross, almost upright now. It is followed by two very bright stars of the Centaur constellation.

Moon, April 2003

1 May *new moon;* 9 May *first quarter* (ovehead at sunset); 16 May *full moon;* 23 May *last quarter* (rises at midnight), 31 Moy *new moon.*

BOOK SALE

Up to 50% off EANHS publications

In May and June 03 and at the AGM Nature Kenya members will be able to take advantage of great discounts on EANHS publications

20% OFF

Important Bird Areas of Kenya, by Peter Njoroge & Leon Bennun (2000) @ **800/-** (normally 1000/-)
Upland Kenya Wild Flowers, by A.D.Q. Agnew & Shirley Agnew (1994) @ **1200/-** (normally 1500/-)

50% OFF

Breeding Seasons of East African Birds, by Brown & Britton (1980) @ **120/-** (normally 350/-)

And **receive a Free copy** of *Birds of East Africa, their status and distribution*, by Britton & Brown, 1980, with the purchase of any bird book

Journal of East African Natural History **Vol 90 (1&2) *now available*** from the Nature Kenya office @ 1000/-

Main article is *The science of 'man-eating' among lions Panthera leo with a reconstruction of the natural history of the 'Man-eaters of Tsavo'* J.C. Kerbis Peterhans & T. P. Gnoske

*Issues of the *Journal of East African Natural History* published prior to 1994 are normally available at the Nature Kenya office @ 2/- per page while the *EANHS Bulletin* back issues prior to 2000 are 20/- per copy

REGULAR ACTIVITIES

BIRD RINGING

Meet at the Museums' Noirobi Botonic Garden, at 7:00 a.m. every Thursday.

SUNDAY BIRDWATCH

Members meet ot the National Museum, Nairobi car park at 9:00 a.m. the third Sunday of every month, **i.e. 18 May**. The members decide where to go. Bring lunch

TREE WALK

Guided Tree Wolks in the Arboretum on the second Soturdoy ond lost Mondoy, i.e. **10 & 26 May from 9:30 a.m.** Meet ot the Arboretum gate. *Those who are not members of FONA or Nature Kenya poy Ksh 100/- fee on arrival at the gate.*

WEDNESDAY MORNING BIRDWALKS

Bird wotching walks at sites in and around Nairobi. Meet at the National Museum car park every Wednesday at 8:45 a.m. Return about 12:30 p.m. *Those who ore not members can get temporary membership ot Ksh 100 per birdwalk, payoble on orrival at the cor park.*

ARABUKO-SOKOKE (COAST)

The Soturday birdwatch with the Arabuko Sokoke Forest Guides Association is on the first Saturday of each month i.e. **3 May, at 6:30 a.m.** from the Visitor Centre, Gede. Cost 100/- per person.

FFJ Bird Walk (Coast)

Friends of Fort Jesus birdwalks are held the third Saturday of each month, **i.e.17 May.** Please call Morlene Reid on (011) 491 648 to confirm

Ngong Road Forest Walks (Nairobi)

The Ngong Road Forest Sanctuary Trust Nature walks are held on the first ond third Saturdays of the month i.e. **3 & 17 May, at 9:00 a.m.** Meet at the stairs leading to the Restouront ot the Racecourse.

MAY DIARY

Thu 1	Giraffe Centre outing
Sat 3	ASF Birdwalks & NRF wolk
Sot 10	Tree Walk at Arboretum
Mon 12	EANHS AGM
Sat 17	Succulenta AGM & NRF walk
Sun 18	Sundoy Birdwalk
Sat 24	Birding at Tona trip
Mon 26	Tree Walk

Birdwolks every Wednesday Morning
Bird ringing every Thursday Morning

Bird Hotline
3749957

Barn Owls in old Hamerkap nest *April* Snake Park, Natianal Museum, Nairobi

Red-bellied Paradise Flycatcher, *Kakamega farest/ 14-16 March* Dave Richards

five groups of **Hinde's Babblers, Eastern Nicator, Lead-coloured Flycatcher, Black-headed Batis, Peter's Twinspot, Yellow-bellied Greenbul**, area *east of Embu/ 29-30 March* Brian Finch, Itai Shanni, Richard & Anne Bishop

Imperial Eagle, two **Long-legged Buzzards**, three **Eurasian Griffans, Greater Spotted Eagle, Pallid Swifts, Icterine Warbler, Barred Warbler** *in Nairobi NP /March/early April* Brian Finch, Itai Shanni, Bernd de Bruijn and Shailesh Patel

Black-eared Wheatear, *Mpala Ranch/ still present late March* Titus Imboma

Eurasian Wryneck, *Nara Moru River Lodge/ 1st week March*; breeding plumage **Standard-winged Nightjar** and **Little Yellow Flycatcher**, *Kilaguni Ladge, Tsava West/ March* Ben Mugambi

Papyrus Gonalek - 12 individuals, *Dunga Swamp/April* Lake Victoria Sunset Birders

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'Thanks to all who responded to our request'

Joseph Oyugi writes

... I got tons of replies for my request. I have more than enough sunbird populations to work with (all over the country). I'm very excited about this. I'm waiting for some grants and hope to come in June for some experiments with the feeders. Cheers

Joseph Okoth Oyugi
University of Illinois at Chicago
Ecology and Evolution Group
joyugi1@uic.edu

A few minutes loter, the millipede is no longer producing any light, and virtually invisible in the purply block shadows of the moonless night. The phenomenon of the glowing millipede is known as Bioluminescence - quite literolly, 'living light'.

Bioluminescence is a natural phenomenon that occurs in a range of creatures including earthworms, fireflies and millipedes. The function of the light varies from species to species and its exoct physiological mechanisms ore little understood. All millipedes are ploced in the arthropod order Diplopodo, os eoch segment of their cylindrical body has two pairs of legs. They are common throughout Africa.

The production of light in the millipedes' case is to serve as means of defense. The shrieking bushbabies probably seemed like a sufficient threat to warrant the production of light - most of us would think twice about swallowing something that was glowing! In fact, the millipede had little to feor from these bushbobies as they much prefer fruit and birds' eggs.

The sudden production of light serves to confuse the would-be predator. They must think - what's going on! - when suddenly confronted by the ghostly hoze. This in itself is often enough to dissuade them and allow the millipede to escape. Without biting jaws or piercing spines, other species of millipede rely on equolly complex means of protection. They secrete irritoting chemicals from glands when molested. The smelly secretions include hydrocyanic acid, iodine ond quinone. Between light and chemistry, millipedes have some intriguing means of defense!

Mammal sighted

Large Grey Mangaase (Egyptian Mangaase), *Herpestes ichneuman* crossing road near Paradise Last, Kiambu/ April **Fleur Ng'wena**

DECLARATION

Nature Kenya does not accept any responsibility whatsoever in respect of negligence of any of its staff, volunteers or members organising the outings/trips or for any loss, injury, death or damage to property.

Editor, Catherine Ngarachu

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Anti-privatization campaigners lined up to attack Suez, Vivendi, and Thames Water, the three largest water service companies in the world. Although there are legitimate concerns that need to be answered, simply closing off one possible avenue for getting more taps and toilets to people, does not seem to be a very productive way to campaign for universal access to water. With two-thirds of the world's population forecast to experience water scarcity in 2025, it is likely that these people will not care who delivers the water, so long as it is delivered. Nor does it reflect the reality that private sector companies are still the 'minnows' of water delivery, being responsible for only about 5-6% of supplies worldwide.

Most alarming is the apparent refusal of the European Commission's Directorate General for Development, and EU member state bilateral aid agencies, to allocate the additional funds needed for water issues. This is despite political pledges made at the launch of the EU Water Initiative in Johannesburg. The European Commission alone is reported to be sitting on upwards of 10 billion Euros that could be used for taps, toilets, food production, and investments in ecological health, if only the civil servants could get their collective acts together.

Many of the controversial issues around dams have already been aired and partly resolved during a two-year multi-stakeholder dialogue, the World Commission on Dams (WCD). But many high street banks are still involved in providing loans for dams that are likely to fail to deliver technically and economically, and may lead to social unrest and ecological damage. At the forum, WWF launched an Investor's Guide to Dams, based on the WCD, which provides a practical means for banks to avoid unnecessary risks associated with dams. The challenge for banks, in the commercial or public sectors, is to take the WCD report off the shelf and put it into action.

**Richard Holland is Policy Adviser Sustainable Water Use in WWF's Living Waters Programme.* This article is used courtesy of WWF International. For the full article and more information on the World Water Forum go to www.panda.org

Photos credit Ramsar stickers

CLASSIFIEDS

Course: Conflict Transformation in the Context of Environment

Course objectives include to study the significance of environmental damage caused by conflict

For registration contact Family Meditation and Conciliation at 211369 or email jkmbaabu@africaonline.co.ke

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Rates for Classifieds: • Up to 25 words 250/- • Up to 50 words 500/- Ads • 1/4 page @ 1750/- • 1/2 page @ 3000/- with image +500/-

Networking for Sustainable Livelihoods

Eastern Africa Environmental Network (EAEN) 13th Annual Conference 23 -24 May 03 at the Louis Leakey Hall, National Museum, Nairobi

A regional forum for all people, to share ideas and experiences, in plenary sessions, group discussions, posters, displays, exhibitions and informally.

For further details contact George Makakwen, Conference Coordinator, tel 601064 or email eaen@onlinekenya.com

FIELD TRIPS

Giraffe Centre, Thu 1 May '03

Enjoy a nature walk, with the Youth Committee. Bring along a picnic lunch and meet at the National Museum, Nairobi, car park at 10:00 a.m. or at the Giraffe Centre at 10:45 a.m. Transport by public means.

Birding at the Tana Sat 24 May '03

We will travel on the Nyeri Rd, to Savage Camp, near Sagana town. From Savage we will walk the nearby hills and farmland.

Facilities at Savage Camp include a covered eating area, showers and a swimming pool. So bring along the kids (and someone to mind them). Also bring a picnic lunch and meet at the National Museums, Nairobi, car park at 7:30 a.m.

Book with 250/- at the Nature Kenya front office by 16 May '03.

L. Nakuru N. P., Fri 6 - Sun 8 June '03

Activities will include game drive (KWS assisted) and walk to Menengai Crater.

Transport by public means.Book at the Nature Kenya front office by 23 May '03. (A Youth Committee outing)

BirdLife WORLD BIRDWATCH 4 - 5 OCTOBER 03

How World BirdWatch Works!

Bird watchers or 'birders' are people who enjoy looking and listening to birds. Kenya has over 1080 species of birds - that's about 12% of the world's bird species.

For World BirdWatch 03, bird watchers in Africa, Europe and S. America, will celebrate birds and try to see as many as possible.

In Kenya, each team is given, a geographic area, a checklist (with all bird species viewable in Kenya) and 48 hours to observe as many bird species as possible.

As teams see birds on the list, they check off against the bird's name on the checklist. The lists are tallied back at Nature Kenya and the team *with the highest percentage of birds spotted of the number possible in your assigned* area wins!

To participate, you need a team of 2 to 6 people, an idea of where you would like to birdwatch and at least a pair of binoculars per team.

Contact Jonti at Nature Kenya for an entry form or a list of lodges, bandas and campsites that have offered Nature Kenya special rates.